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Confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/72/150.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 71/39, the General Assembly reaffirmed the ways and means regarding confidence- and security-building measures set out in the report of the Disarmament Commission on its 1993 session (A/48/42), and it called upon Member States to pursue these ways and means through sustained consultations and dialogue, while at the same time avoiding actions that might hinder or impair such a dialogue. Furthermore, the Assembly urged States to comply strictly with all bilateral, regional and international agreements, including arms control and disarmament agreements, to which they were a party. The Assembly also emphasized that the objective of confidence-building measures should be to help to strengthen international peace and security and to be consistent with the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments, and encouraged the promotion of bilateral and regional confidence-building measures, with the consent and participation of the parties concerned, to avoid conflict and prevent the unintended and accidental outbreak of hostilities. It requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its seventy-second session containing the views of Member States on confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request and on the basis of information received from Member States.

2. A note verbale was sent to Member States on 2 March 2017, requesting their views, followed by a note verbale dated 12 June 2017. At the time of reporting, replies from the Governments of Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Spain and Ukraine, as well as from the European Union, had been received and these are reproduced in sections II and III below. Additional replies received after 31 July 2017 will be posted on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs¹ in the language of submission only.

II. Replies received from Member States

Colombia

[Original: Spanish]

[30 May 2017]

Colombia is of the view that regional and subregional instruments that promote confidence-building measures encourage transparency, lead to better relations among States and contribute to the prevention of conflict. While a number of these instruments require voluntary reports, Colombia supports all means of building confidence among States, in particular initiatives designed to foster the responsible exchange of information relating to arms transfers.

With regard to global transparency, the importance and relevance of the Register of Conventional Arms should be underscored, given that, if all countries report their acquisitions, there is a lower risk of a potential destabilization of the balance of power as a result of the accumulation of arms. Colombia reported to the Register in 1993, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 (the last two reports were sent by the Ministry of National Defence on 4 May 2015). Moreover, together with Chile, Colombia was one of the two Latin American countries that participated in the most recent meeting of the Group of Governmental Experts on the continuing operation and further development of the Register.

¹ www.un.org/disarmament/.

In terms of military spending, one particularly noteworthy confidence-building instrument is the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures, which is aimed at achieving real reductions in military expenditures. Our country has submitted reports through that mechanism every year from 2007 to 2013 and is already in the process of preparing its report for this year.

At the regional level, Colombia participates in the Conference of Defence Ministers of the Americas and in monitoring the implementation of confidence- and security-building measures, with a view to promoting reciprocal knowledge and the exchange of ideas at the ministerial level in the area of defence and hemispheric security.

Also worthy of mention, at the subregional level, is the experience of the South American Defence Council in the background, development of methodology and tools (manuals and electronic templates) for reporting in the following instruments: implementation procedures for confidence- and security-building measures, the South American defence expenditure registry and the South American military inventory.

Another important measure is the establishment of forums at the regional and subregional levels for the evaluation and analysis of global and hemispheric measures related to confidence-building. The exchange of best practices for the purpose of reducing crime and various threats that affect integrity and security is also essential.

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[28 March 2017]

Confidence-building measures must enhance understanding, transparency and cooperation among States. If used appropriately, such measures can contribute to maintaining international peace and security. They should therefore be preserved, expanded and improved in order to prevent and avoid international conflicts. Appropriate implementation of confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels can help to prevent the outbreak of armed conflict and promote regional stability.

The guidelines for confidence-building measures adopted by consensus in 1988 by the Disarmament Commission of the General Assembly state that confidence-building is "a step-by-step process of taking all concrete and effective measures which express political commitments and are of military significance and which are designed to make progress in strengthening confidence and security to lessen tension and assist in arms limitation and disarmament".

Observance of the norms and principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for the sovereignty of States and non-intervention in their internal affairs, rejection of the threat or use of force, cooperation among States, and adherence in good faith to the provisions of international law are all indispensable elements for effective confidence-building. It is of paramount importance that confidence-building be undertaken with the consent and participation of all parties concerned. Because they are voluntary in nature, confidence-building measures cannot be imposed. In order to be effective, such measures must take into account the interests, needs and specific characteristics of each country, region or subregion.

The Latin American and Caribbean region has contributed to the establishment of a favourable environment for the development of confidence-building measures

in the region, and, along with extra-regional actors, to the declaration of the region as a zone of peace at the second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, held in Havana, Cuba. That proclamation represents the region's commitment to preventing war and resolving regional conflicts by peaceful means.

Ecuador

[Original: Spanish]
[28 July 2017]

Ecuador considers that improvements in regional and subregional integration provide the appropriate framework for the implementation of confidence-building measures. In Latin America and the Caribbean, such integration has been achieved through the establishment of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the declaration of the region as a zone of peace by the Heads of State and Government of CELAC.

In the context of the Union of South American Nations, the South American Defence Council has achieved significant progress in a number of areas, with the aim of making South America a zone of peace and cooperation. To that end, in the Declaration of Paramaribo of 30 August 2013, the Heads of State of the region noted that the Council was the ideal space for moving forward in the development of strategic thinking.

At present, the Council is developing a shared vision on regional defence, based on such aspects as the protection of strategic natural resources, cyberdefence and cooperation in the defence industry and in capacity-building and training, in particular with the establishment of the South American Defence College.

Under its action plan for 2017, the Council aims to continue its work on matters related to, *inter alia*, defence policies, including the gender perspective; military cooperation, humanitarian actions and peace operations, including demining experiences; the defence industry and technology; and education and training, including on topics related to the environment and biodiversity, as well as international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels have, in the view of Ecuador, been essential in building a defence system geared to face new challenges and combat common threats through the implementation of regional instruments in the service of peace and regional stability. They have also served to strengthen cooperative efforts in areas of common concern — such as the mapping of natural disaster risks and the conduct of peacekeeping exercises — that will benefit the peoples of our region.

Georgia

[Original: English]
[9 May 2017]

Georgia attaches great importance to confidence-building measures, which play a significant role in supporting actions taken against the proliferation of weapons and in reducing tensions between States. Such measures foster transparency, dialogue and cooperation, thereby creating a climate conducive to effective disarmament and arms control.

With regard to confidence- and security-building measures taken at the regional level, Georgia is a participating State of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), including its Forum for Security Cooperation,

established in 1992. Georgia is also a party to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Treaty on Open Skies and it has adopted the Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures. With regard to confidence-building measures and related activities, Georgia participates in the exchange of information through the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, Global Exchange of Military Information, questionnaire on anti-personnel landmines, Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition and documents on conventional arms transfers.

With regard to confidence- and security-building measures taken at the subregional level, Georgia is a participating State of the Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in the Naval Field in the Black Sea.

The existing regimes related to confidence- and security-building measures currently consist of interlocking exchanges of mandatory and verifiable notifications on military holdings and activities and armed force levels. The regimes contribute to greater transparency, thus promoting trust and confidence among participating States. Georgia has fully implemented a great number of OSCE codes of conduct and principles and adheres to the various regimes of information exchange.

Jordan

[Original: Arabic]
[19 May 2017]

The Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan supports United Nations efforts to promote confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels in order to establish peace and security throughout the world. Jordan has consistently supported General Assembly resolutions aimed at establishing peace, resolving conflicts through peaceful means, promoting confidence-building and transparency measures at all levels and at supporting disarmament and arms control, in order to foster trust among the States of the region and thereby defuse potential armed conflicts. Jordan encourages the resolution of armed conflicts through negotiation, arbitration and legal settlement, by resorting to regional agencies or arrangements, or by other peaceful means chosen by the parties.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan complies with all Security Council resolutions on weapons of mass destruction, disarmament, non-proliferation and the use of force against civilians, particularly those resolutions concerning the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, such as Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which provides the basis for curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction at the regional and international levels. Jordan also urges States to comply with United Nations resolutions and bilateral, regional and international instruments.

Jordan complies with measures aimed at controlling conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. This course of action has directly affected the country's security policy at the regional and subregional levels. Jordan is party to a number of international instruments and participates in a number of initiatives concerning conventional weapons, weapons of mass destruction, non-proliferation and counter-terrorism, and participates in international efforts to prohibit the trade in small and light weapons, with a view to building confidence, promoting cooperation and establishing peace and security in the region and around the world. Following are some of those instruments and initiatives:

- The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
- The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
- The Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects
- The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction
- The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction
- The Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism
- The Proliferation Security Initiative

Jordan understands that terrorism is one of the most significant threats to global peace and security. The Government believes in the importance of combating all forms of terrorism and stresses that terrorism has no religion. Terrorism poses a major challenge for the defence policy of Jordan and has the potential to undermine national security. In keeping with its political positions, which are characterized by tolerance, prudence, reason and foresight, the country has endeavoured to counter terrorism by enacting laws at the national level, acceding to all international counter-terrorism instruments and supporting all international counter-terrorism initiatives.

Jordan has concluded military agreements aimed at establishing regional peace and security with many countries in the region and beyond, such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union. The Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan provides its armed forces with adequate equipment and military weapons for protecting its territory and safeguarding its basic security interests, and not for the purpose of attacking other States. Furthermore, the Jordanian armed forces participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations throughout the world, in order to foster security, peace and stability in various conflict areas. Jordan is one of the most significant contributors to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

At the regional level, Jordan has collaborated closely with neighbouring States, on a basis of cooperation and shared interests, to establish peace and security in the Middle East. Jordan concluded a peace treaty with the State of Israel in 1994, and, since then, the Government has continued to be a regional pioneer, acceding to international treaties and instruments on arms control and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in order to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. In 1998, Jordan signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and subsequently removed all mines along the border between Jordan and Israel. It also created the National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation (<http://nedr.org.jo/>) in order to follow up on that process and to ensure that Jordan was cleared of all mines and explosives that could kill civilians by 2012, as well as to provide assistance to anyone injured by landmines.

On the humanitarian front, Jordan has always been among the first in the region to take the initiative in alleviating human suffering at the regional and international levels. It has hosted many refugees and displaced persons from various countries and has recently welcomed some 1.4 million Syrian refugees, providing

them with health care and social services despite the country's precarious economic situation. Jordan believes that it is important for States to work together to alleviate human suffering. The army continues to provide free medical care, dispatch medical teams, and establish various field hospitals under the auspices of the United Nations. It currently provides those services in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Gaza Strip.

Jordan calls on Member States and the international community to enhance the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping and security efforts by providing the Organization with the tools it needs to prevent conflict and foster trust among States at all levels.

Lebanon

[Original: Arabic]
[6 April 2017]

Lebanon supports all international initiatives and instruments aimed at building confidence. It also supports the maintenance of military balance and efforts to combat the uncontrolled proliferation of various types of weapons in the region and globally, because of the serious global, regional and subregional threats they pose. Lebanon also reaffirms that it complies with international law and the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations, particularly the principles of the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of States. Israel presents the main obstacle to confidence-building for Lebanon at the regional and subregional levels, as it continues to violate international laws and norms and possesses weapons of mass destruction, which constitute an ever-present threat at the local and regional levels.

Madagascar

[Original: French]
[20 June 2017]

The United Nations recalls that:

- Member States should respect agreements already reached at the regional level and avoid any action that might hinder their implementation. The Organization encourages dialogue and promotes bilateral and regional confidence-building measures aimed at preventing conflict.
- Member States should resolve their disputes by peaceful means in order to maintain international peace and security and to support the efforts of the international community to promote arms control and disarmament.

In Madagascar, interventions related to the settlement of disputes at the regional or subregional level fall within the purview of specialized entities, such as the battalion established under the Renforcement des Capacités Africaines de Maintien de la Paix (RECAMP) programme. This battalion is capable of providing support for the implementation of necessary measures in this type of situation.

Spain

[Original: Spanish]
[18 May 2017]

The ultimate goal of a regime for arms control or of confidence- and security-building measures should be conflict prevention by reducing the danger of misperceptions or miscalculations with regard to the military activities of other

States; by implementing measures to make covert military preparations more difficult; and by reducing the risk of surprise attacks or the accidental eruption of hostilities.

From that perspective, confidence- and security-building measures within a regional or subregional context are of great value as a form of prevention specifically adapted to that context, given that they involve a smaller number of participants and can therefore be more stringent and thus more effective. All of the foregoing makes such measures easier to adopt and implement.

Within its own regional sphere, Spain has actively participated in all relevant initiatives; it is a party to the Treaty on Open Skies and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which include a set of legally binding measures and, as a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), it is politically bound through the measures contained in the Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (which was updated in 2011 with the aim of improving and broadening its implementation), as well as by other OSCE documents. Moreover, Spain has contributed to the implementation of the regional stabilization agreements established by annex I-B to the Dayton Agreement for the former Yugoslavia.

A fundamental and key element for the performance of verification activities in connection with disarmament and Spain's security- and confidence-building measures abroad is the Spanish Verification Unit, a defence agency established in 1991 and responsible for the detailed planning and performance of said activities.

Spain is also participating in the structured dialogue on current and future challenges and risks hosted by OSCE, which represents the first step towards relaunching discussions on arms control and confidence- and security-building measures in Europe.

Ukraine

[Original: English]
[27 April 2017]

Ukraine's consistent commitment to enhancing transparency and predictability in the military field, including through effective confidence-building measures, remains unchanged. Moreover, this commitment has been reinforced by the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Ukraine continues to support all confidence-building measures taken at the regional level, including those of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and at the subregional and bilateral levels. It has been actively participating in the revision of the OSCE Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and advocates expanding the scope of application of these measures. As a victim of Russia's hybrid war, Ukraine also favours tightening the intrusiveness of the measures, including through lowering the thresholds for the notification and observation of military exercises, which can be used as a means of intimidation and preparation for direct military aggression, especially against neighbouring States. Ukraine further favours an increase in the number of inspections and the size of inspection teams, the strengthening of risk-reduction mechanisms, including through the use of fact-finding missions, and a constant assessment of the efficiency of confidence-building measures instruments, including from the perspective of their applicability, usefulness and viability during an armed conflict, in order to preclude a repeat of Ukraine's tragic case anywhere else.

Ukraine attaches great importance to bilateral confidence-building measures with neighbouring countries in border areas. To date, Ukraine has entered into relevant bilateral agreements with the Republic of Poland, Hungary, the Slovak Republic, the Republic of Belarus and Romania. Conducting inspections on a parity basis pursuant to those agreements has confirmed their practical usefulness in maintaining and deepening trust, friendly relations and politico-military cooperation among the countries concerned, thereby enhancing and complementing the European confidence- and security-building process.

Noteworthy features of these bilateral regimes, which could be borrowed by others to design or improve confidence-building measures, are: the observation of military activities starting from the tactical level; the prohibition of military exercises at the battalion level and above, at a distance of 10-20 km from a border; the application of such measures near the border to activities of not only the armed forces, but also other forces; the possibility of extending inspections for an additional period of time and their expansion to battalion-level units.

Regrettably, the numerous proposals that Ukraine made to enter into a similar agreement with Russia were rejected by the Russian side. In addition, the Russian Federation has put into an ongoing state of impasse such subregional military cooperation and confidence-building arrangements of the Black Sea littoral States as the confidence- and security-building measures in the naval field in the Black Sea initiated by Ukraine.

Notwithstanding the deteriorated security situation in the OSCE region caused by the current Kremlin leadership's behaviour, Ukraine believes that the experience gained in the development of confidence-building measures in the OSCE region deserves appropriate attention and, therefore, that the Vienna Document, which has generated a great deal of experience in the field of confidence-building, can serve as a viable example for similar arrangements in other regions of the world.

III. Reply received from the European Union

[Original: English]
[5 July 2017]

The European Union strongly supports the establishment of confidence- and security-building measures as an important tool to overcome mistrust, enhance transparency and maintain peace and security at the regional and subregional levels.

Confidence-building measures constitute an important factor in preventing conflict and enhance overall political stability and the overall security environment, especially in situations of armed conflict and in areas of tension.

European countries have greatly benefited from the confidence-building measures that have been introduced in Europe, in particular by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and through provisions of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the Treaty on Open Skies and the OSCE Vienna Document regime, Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition, among others.

The European Union will therefore continue to support and promote confidence-building measures both at the regional and subregional levels, as well as in other parts of the world, and especially in areas of tension, taking into account the specific characteristics of each region.